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ABSTRACT

A 1991 survey of Directors of Special Education in Kansas indicated a shortage of deaf education teachers and problems with retention of deaf education teachers in rural areas. In addition, 15 of 22 respondents documented an increase in the number of deaf and hard-of-hearing (D/HH) children in their districts. Project Rural Education is a program developed by the University of Kansas to provide teacher training in deaf education as well as inservice training for rural deaf education teachers. Training focuses on the inclusion of D/HH students in the regular classroom setting. Courses cover consultation, program and curricular adaptations, language and literacy needs, sign language, and multicultural needs. Training is provided through interactive/compressed video, correspondence courses, and video tapes. Eight teachers who were trained by this project are currently working in rural communities in Kansas. In addition, 22 teachers and more than 100 related service providers have expressed interest in gaining certification. In November 1992, the U.S. Department of Education issued a policy statement recommending that school personnel act with caution when placing children who were deaf or hard of hearing with hearing peers. However, approximately 79 percent of students who are deaf or hard of hearing are currently included or educated in public school settings. Successful inclusion requires that teachers of the deaf work with administrators to ensure that students who are D/HH are appropriately assessed, that their needs are adequately documented, that the required supports and services are provided, and that an appropriate placement is recommended based on those needs. (LP)

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Deaf Education in Kansas Public Schools

Introduction

Two-thirds of the school systems in the country are rural (Gold et al., 1993). Johnson, Pugachard, and Cook (1993) noted that recruitment and retention of rural/remote teachers is persistently difficult due to feelings of geographic and professional isolation. Davis (1987) found that "isolationism" increases because teachers have restricted assistance in program planning and support. Gold et al., (1993) cited that communication barriers among staff lead to feelings of isolation as well. Both groups suggested "peer collaboration" as a mechanism of interaction and mutual problem-solving to better serve students. However, Wengerd (1994) reported that most teacher training programs for certification in deaf education don't include the competencies needed to collaborate or to work optimally in rural and remote areas.

Deafness in Kansas

At present, 83% of Kansas School Districts meet the criteria for "rural" defined by the U.S. Department of Education. Directors of Special Education, surveyed by the author in 1991, indicated both a shortage and

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difficulty with retention of teachers of the deaf available in rural Kansas. Fifteen of 22 respondents documented increases in the number of deaf and hard-of-hearing children in their district. Teacher of the deaf shortages reported in the survey to State Directors of Special Education were verified in a report regarding the "Attrition of Special Education Personnel in Vacancies" (Hodges, 1991). Attrition rates are apparent in all areas of special education in the state, including deaf education. Reasons for attrition are not clear but it is apparent that personnel shortages in deaf education continue to be a problem in Kansas and require innovative use of existing training resources.

Dissertation work by Maile (1994) demonstrated that when experts in deafness in the 28 school districts in Kansas that serve students who are D/HH were asked to rate their programs with regard to national standards, services in the state were bleak at best. However, recent federal support for training in deafness has enabled the university to provide education to both local future teachers of the deaf as well as rural teachers to the deaf. Courses about

consultation, program and curricular adaptions, language and literacy needs, sign and multicultural needs are standard component of the urban KU program. The director of the program has written recent papers on the roles and responsibilities of teachers of the deaf in inclusive settings-with attention to many of the specific activities shared in this paper.

Materials provided can assist those in public school settings in designing an appropriate and/or inclusive education for more children who are D/HH. Materials can be used so that general education personnel are fortified, their talents and energies utilized (Fuchs and Fuchs, 1994) to appropriately serve all children. Tools have been developed to assist in the learning of sign by all members of the school community, to adapt the program as well as the curriculum, to improve the social environment so language mode differences don't negatively impact friendships, to establish language policies involving sign use, and to respect and actively recruit involvement by deaf adults (Luetke-Stahlman, 1994). This information might benefit administrators, teachers, related service providers, and parents who

are in need of such training (Hasazi et al., 1994).

Materials provided are a result of project Rural Deaf Education which also allowed deaf education faculty at the University of Kansas to become skilled with training over interactive/compressed video, to adapt four courses into long distance "correspondence-like" courses, and to develop both beginning and intermediate sign courses on video tape (with written support). Eight teachers, trained by that project, are now working in rural/remote communities in Kansas and approximately 22 additional teachers and more than 100 related services providers in Kansas have now expressed an interest in certification.

Topics

Materials provided discuss 1) best practices in deaf education with rural adaptations; 2) programmatic and curricular modifications; 3) an inclusion checklist (adapted from professionals in Austin, Texas); a list describing numerous videos available from the author on a wide range of topics related to deafness (e.g., reading, English language assessment, speech, audition, socialization, etc.); and 4) a list of formal English language assessment tools.

Information as to why teachers of the deaf should be hired and a handout on student-interpreter relationship is also included.

"Best Practice" Recommendations for the Non-Exclusion of Students Who are Deaf or Hard-of-Hearing

In November, 1992, the U.S. Department of Education issued a policy statement in the Federal Register. It stated that school personnel were to act with caution before placing children who were deaf or hard of hearing with hearing peers. In the "notice of policy guidance", Education Secretary Lamar Alexander stated that many schools must interpret the "least restrictive environment" (LRE) clause of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act; IDEA (formerly the Education for all Handicapped Children Act passed in 1976-77), and needed to place more emphasis on IDEA's mandate to offer an "**appropriate education.**" The notice of policy further clarified that any setting, including the general classroom or school environment that prevents a child who is deaf from receiving an appropriate education that meets his/her education and social needs, is not the LRE for that child. Nevertheless, approximately 79% of students who are deaf or hard of hearing (D/HH) are currently "included" or educated in public school

settings (Eleventh Annual Report to Congress on the Implementation of the Education of the Handicapped Act (1989). The term "full-inclusion", has been defined by the National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE) to be that inclusion in which all students attend their home school with their age and grade age peers. The popularity in use of this model has made it all the more important that teachers of the deaf work with administrators to ensure the following sequence of activities occur: that students who are D/HH are appropriately assessed that, their needs are adequately documented, that the required supports and services are provided, and that an appropriate placement is recommended based on those needs. This sequence and not one that begins with discussion regarding placement, ensures an <u>appropriate</u> education. The following recommendations are provided to assist parents, administrators, and teachers in providing an appropriate program for deaf and hard of hearing students who are D/HH.

(materials and references from author upon request)